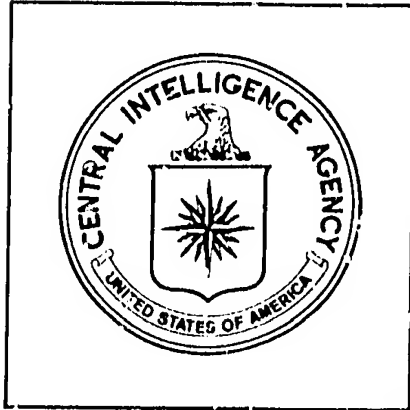


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# Soviet Union-Eastern Europe

STAFF NOTES

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**SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE**

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USSR-Middle East: Still Looking for a Role

The Soviets have not succeeded in generating momentum behind their proposal last month to reconvene the Geneva conference and are groping for some new approach that will enable them to play a larger role in Middle East diplomacy. Despite their reservations about discussing the Middle East at the UN, Moscow may now be hoping that next month's Security Council debate will give a new push to the Geneva conclave.

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Fyrlin, deputy chief of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Near East Division, has frankly admitted that the language in the Soviet-Palestinian communique regarding Israel had papered over continuing differences between Moscow and the PLO. He said that Moscow envisions a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza, but that most fedayeen continue to reject the idea of recognizing Israel within its 1967 borders. He added, however, that "some" PLO leaders accepted the West Bank-Gaza concept.

Fyrlin hailed Arafat's endorsement of PLO attendance at Geneva as "a big step forward." He said, however, that Moscow thinks the PLO should be a "separate" delegation and reiterated Moscow's recent position that PLO delegates should attend the conference from the beginning.

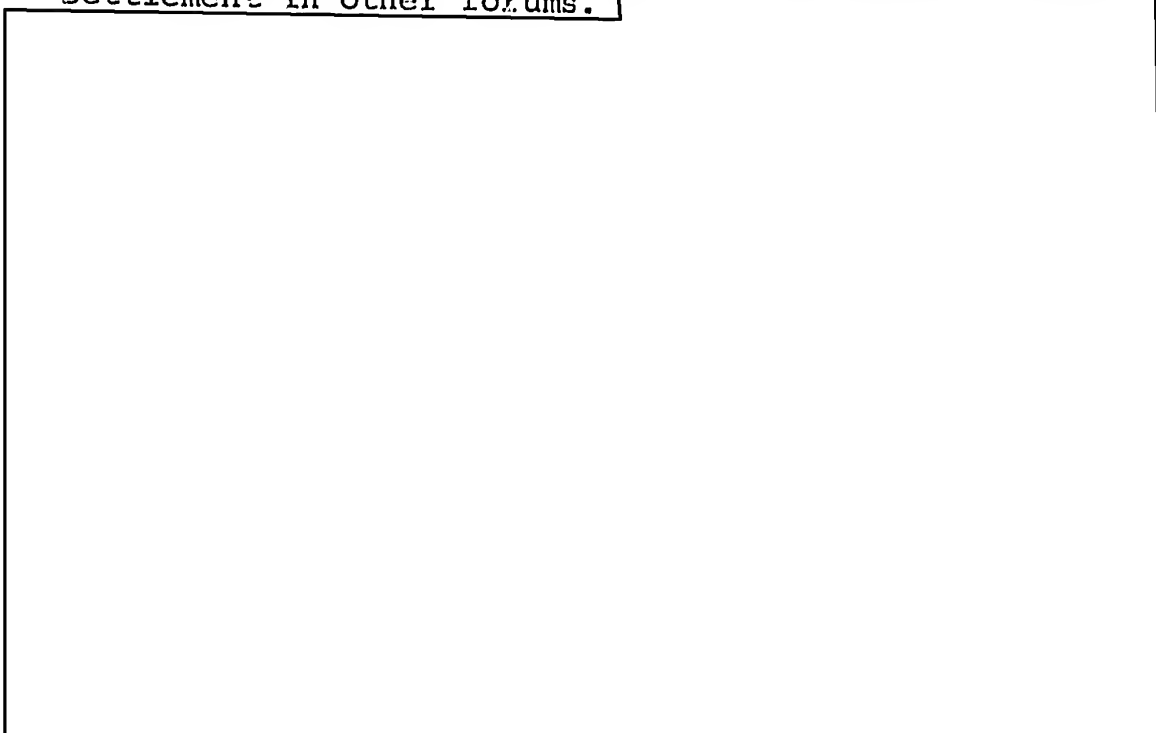
Although Moscow recognizes that such a formula for Palestinian representation prevents reconvening

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Geneva in the immediate future, until the last few days it had been decidedly cool to discussing a peace settlement in other forums.

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Recently, however, there have been signs that Moscow now thinks it must get on the UN bandwagon. Pyrlin, for example, grudgingly acknowledged that the Syrian UN initiative was paying political dividends. On Tuesday, Moscow and its Warsaw Pact allies formally announced that the UN should play a more active role in the peace-seeking process.

Moscow may seek to turn the UN debate in its favor by using it to generate new momentum for Geneva. Pyrlin suggested as much recently when he said that the Security Council discussion might formulate a "program of action" that would open the way to convening the conference. He said that the Security Council debate might also push the UN toward more realistic policies.

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The Soviets on the Pacific Doctrine

Soviet propagandists have reacted in predictably negative fashion to President Ford's announcement of a new Pacific Doctrine.

The most extensive Soviet comment to date appeared in an *Izvestia* article on December 15. It was equally hard on the US and China, the US for allegedly seeking yet another formula to justify maintaining a large military presence in Asia, and China for allegedly going along with Washington. The article cited the President's statement that China and the US had agreed to oppose hegemony in Asia and implied strongly that the two will in fact work together against the interests of the "peoples of Asia."

As an antidote to alleged Sino-US machinations in Asia, *Izvestia* offered up Moscow's own Asian collective security idea (which has no Asian supporters other than Mongolia) as more in keeping with Asian interests.

The weekly International Observers broadcast and an article in *Pravda* on December 16 attacked the doctrine as an idea inconsistent with detente.

Moscow's propaganda line on the US military presence in Asia should not obscure what is almost certainly Moscow's real position. To be sure, the Soviets hope that eventually the US will withdraw militarily from Asia. For the present, however, Moscow probably regards the US military presence in Asia as a stabilizing factor, one which serves as a brake on possible Chinese and North Korean "adventurism" and which probably also helps retard closer Chinese-US relations.

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Semi-annual Soviet Castigation of NATO

Some new themes have appeared in the usual Soviet criticism of NATO ministerial meetings. As in the past, the criticism has been voluminous and vehement, but now, in the aftermath of the European security conference, the Soviets seem to find NATO policies particularly offensive. The harshest of the Soviet statements, an article in *Red Star* on December 14, says that the "odor of the cold war" emanates from NATO's winter meetings and that once again NATO strategists are putting their main reliance on force. Despite the Soviets' persistent emphasis on CSCE in general and the reference to confidence-building measures in the NATO communique, the Soviets take no notice of either, further evidence of the distress this subject seems to cause in Moscow

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While much of the Soviet commentary is routine fulmination, there seems to be a degree of genuine concern about efforts to draw France into a closer relationship with the Western alliance. The recent proposal to form a new and purely European arms standardization group (the Independent Programming Group) is seen as only a plot to lure France back into closer participation in NATO military affairs. France agreed to participate informally in the activities of this group, but rejected involvement in a European arms procurement agency, which they said was too closely linked to NATO and its Eurogroup. The Soviets dismiss the independence of both organizations as a sham. A *Pravda* article by Yury Zhukov cites internal French political opponents of the Eurogroup proposal, suggesting that Moscow will have more to say on the subject if the plan seems to be gaining ground.

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Soviet commentators also take note of talk about drawing Spain into NATO activities, reflecting Soviet fear that the death of Franco has removed the major obstacle to closer Spanish integration with Western organizations.

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The USSR Plans its First Port  
for Mammoth Tankers

Projects envisaged by the Soviets at the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk during the 1976-1980 Five Year Plan include a berth for the loading of very large crude carriers up to 250,000 deadweight tons. The biggest existing Soviet tanker terminal--also at Novorossiysk--can take ships up to about 90,000 tons. Previously announced Soviet port improvement plans contemplated the handling of vessels up to 150,000 tons, the size of the largest Soviet tankers. Realization of the new plan and the introduction of more efficient and larger tankers will make short-haul Soviet crude oil out of the Black Sea more competitive by lowering its delivered cost. The other producers of short-haul crude for the European market have only four ports that can handle larger tankers, two in Libya and two in Nigeria.

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